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S E C R E T SECTION 01 OF 02 ANKARA 004856

SIPDIS

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TAGS: [PGOV](#) [PREL](#) [TU](#)

SUBJECT: TURKEY: MORE ON DEHAP PLAN TO VISIT PKK/KADEK IN
IRAQ

REF: ANKARA 4848

(U) Classified by Charge d'Affaires a.i. Robert S. Deutsch.
Reason:1.5(b)(d)

1. (C) July 31, following delivery of reftel points to DEHAP regarding the party's planned Aug. 4 delegation to PKK/KADEK members in northern Iraq, Diyarbakir Mayor Feridun Celik, a delegation leader, called in Ankara requesting a meeting. (Note: as reported reftel, GOT officials had told us the delegation was already in Iraq. End note).

2. (S) With Celik at the venue were two influential Kurds: 1) Ihsan Arslan (strictly protect throughout), an AK Party Diyarbakir M.P. and Kurdish activist close to P.M. Erdogan. Arslan is also the de facto right-hand man of AK Vice Chairman Firat on Kurdish issues; and 2) an independent Kurdish source with excellent access to both Kurdish nationalist and Islamic circles.

3. (S) A/Polcouns reiterated reftel points to Celik, who acknowledged them and offered the following:

-- The GOT's current reintegration law is like previous versions and will not bring significant numbers of PKK/KADEK members down from the mountains (note: a view shared by Kurdish and other observers across the political spectrum. End note);

-- The law comes in the context of rising tensions in the Kurdish southeast. The PKK/KADEK is preparing to go on the offensive beginning September 1 unless the situation changes;

-- Consequently, the situation "is not as simple as just passing a law calling for them (PKK/KADEK) to submit." DEHAP has legitimate political -- vice "propaganda" -- reasons for making the trip: promoting peace and heading off a return to violence. The party's constituents are increasingly concerned about the situation and are pressing for action by DEHAP;

-- DEHAP is fully aware that the elements of the Turkish State could use the trip to retaliate against the party. In this regard, however, Celik noted that: 1) DEHAP is already facing threat of closure; 2) "They (Turkish authorities) already have Ocalan (incarcerated PKK leader), which means they already have enough information" to shut DEHAP down at any time; 3) DEHAP is convinced that it will not be allowed to stand in the upcoming nationwide, local elections (currently scheduled for spring 2004); DEHAP members are used to having their parties shut down and going to jail.

Arslan: Could Be a Good Idea

4. (S) Arslan (strictly protect) offered that the DEHAP trip might have a positive effect, though it entails risks. It may serve as a pretext for Turkish State pressure on DEHAP that could also poison the general atmosphere in Turkey. Celik interjected to A/Polcouns that senior AK members, including Firat, had responded to DEHAP in a similarly positive way regarding the planned delegation. Arslan added that the AK Government would never formally or publicly endorse such a plan; nevertheless, he agreed to Celik's request to try to broker another meeting for Celik with Interior Minister Abdulkadir Aksu.

Background

15. (S) Turkish press reports Aug. 1 that some 451 members of a variety of terrorist organizations have applied for "re-integration" under the law, even though it has yet to be approved by President Sezer (and might in fact be vetoed). The press also predicts that the figure may eventually reach 3,000; so far, there are no precise indications as to how many of these applicants are or were once affiliated with the PKK/KADEK. In this context, it is worth noting, as the Interior Ministry SecGen told us recently, that one feature of the law is specifically designed to appeal to people still in Turkey -- not, that is, hard-core PKK/KADEK elements in Iraq -- who for various reasons may have provided food or other support to PKK/KADEK and are now worried about their situation. The legal provision allowing such people to turn themselves in without punishment is intended to last for only six months after publication of the law.

Comment

16. (S) There is clearly more going on here than a simple DEHAP publicity stunt. According to the independent Kurdish source, Celik is trying to move DEHAP away from knee-jerk response to PKK/KADEK equities; Celik's own comments to us suggest as much. The view of the AK official is particularly noteworthy, given his connections and track record. In 1996 he visited northern Iraq as part of an unofficial delegation, backed by then P.M. Erbakan, to make contact with PKK representatives. While AK would probably approve of anything that would help bring the PKK down from the mountains, the party brass will almost certainly ensure that their fingerprints are nowhere near the DEHAP delegation -- should DEHAP go through with its plan.
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